

WAYNE STREET METHODIST CHURCH

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Rothert, Martin W.
Brief historical sketch of
the Wayne Street Methodist
Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana



Brief Historical Sketch
of
THE WAYNE STREET METHODIST CHURCH
Fort Wayne, Indiana

May 1942

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Compiled by
Martin W. Rothert

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Chronological Record of Pastors

F. A. Conwell	1840
T. H. Sinex	1850
R. D. Robinson	1851
F. A. Hardin	1852
J. A. Beswick	1853
H. S. Beers	1854
A. S. Kinnan	1855-56
F. A. Sale	1857
L. Dale	1858
C. Martindale	1859-60
M. H. Mendenhall	1861-62
R. Toby	1863-65
W. F. Hemenway	1866-67
J. T. Iddings	1868-69
M. H. Mendenhall	1870-72
H. J. Meck	1873
A. Marine	1874-75
R. N. McKaig	1876-78
A. E. Mahin	1879-81
C. G. Hudson	1882
W. O. Pierce	1883
A. W. Lamport	1884-85
F. G. Browne	1886-87
R. M. Barnes	1888-90
G. N. Eldridge	1891-94
J. H. Bickford	1895
H. W. Bennett	1896-97
W. D. Parr	1898-1900
A. S. Preston	1901-05
M. E. Nethercut	1906
Frank Lenig	1907-08
C. Claud Travis	1909-17
J. F. Porter	1918-21
H. C. Harmon	1922-25
R. R. Detweiler	1926-29
William E. Clark	1929-32
Ernest Wareing	1932-33
E. Bruns Martin	1933-40
Paul L. Benedict	1940-42
B. Brooks Shake	1942-

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-Courtesy of
Dr. U. S. A. Bridge

Origin of Fort Wayne Methodism

Although accounts do not fully agree as to details, it seems that it was a local preacher from Wayne County, Indiana, Rev. James Holman, who was the pioneer Methodist to preach in what is now the city of Fort Wayne. He came in 1824 and held meetings in his own home as well as in other places around, whenever opportunity was offered. No doubt, he created opportunities.

But not until six years later was the work organized. At that time the Ohio Conference with the spirit of "Westward Ho" established a mission here, which was known for some time as the Maumee Mission. Rev. Nehemiah B. Griffith was put in charge. Various places were used for worship until 1840, when a permanent place of worship was built on the present site of the Anthony Hotel.

In the meantime, the Indiana Conference (1835) had organized the Fort Wayne Circuit with the Maumee Mission, later known as the Berry Street Church, as the principal charge. By 1849 the charge had 217 members, and it was deemed best by the conference (then the North Indiana) to have two separate societies, Harrison Street being the dividing line, or to quote, "The street dividing the East and Western Charge being the first street west of the Berry Street Meeting House." The members living to the west of this street were to belong to the new charge, which was first called the West Charge, and sometimes the Fort Wayne Mission. But ere long it was known by the name of the Wayne Street Methodist Church.

The Beginnings of Wayne Street Church (1849)

On a Sunday in the fall of 1849, after the conference session, the west side members met in the chapel of the Methodist College to organize. The meeting opened with prayer, a recording secretary was elected, and twenty-six persons recorded as members. Amicable arrangements were made with the Berry Street Church for the division of the church property. The old personage on West Main Street was turned over to the new charge. This property was traded in for two lots at the southwest corner of Wayne and Broadway. Six stewards were appointed; also, a building committee; and Wayne Street Church was on its way. (1849)

The First Permanent Building (1850-1871)

This was a small structure 35x50 feet near the alley on Broadway, and faced Wayne Street. While the building was in progress, meetings were held in a frame house on West Main Street and later in the chapel of the Methodist College. In the fall of 1850 the church was dedicated and Rev. Sinex was sent by the conference as the minister. The congregation worshiped in this building till 1871. It is regretted that no picture of this church building is available.

The Brick Church

(1871-1896)

Some accounts place the time of this building in 1870. But there are these evidences that 1871 is the correct year: (1) the inscription on the corner stone, still to be seen at the north-west corner of the church. It reads Wayne Street Methodist Episcopal Church Cornerstone laid June 11 A. D. 1871; (2) the date on the gable end of the building itself, where it is given as 1871, according to a picture of the church; and (3) the Minutes of the North Indiana Conference for 1871, which indicate that the date 1870 is too early. This building had its entrance on Wayne Street. The pulpit was at the south end of the auditorium. So the congregation faced the south, that is, toward our present Church School Annex. There were no separate classrooms for the Sunday School, but all met in the church auditorium. There must have been a hubbub of voices, when Sunday School was in session, but this did not hinder the children from their work and attention.

There are evidences of long and faithful service given by consecrated Sunday School teachers, the memories of whom fondly linger in the minds of some members still with us. For some time at least, the Sunday School assembled in the afternoon. From the earliest beginnings of the Society, the honored Methodist traditions were maintained, - class meetings, prayer meetings, revivals, ladies' aid societies, and missionary activities.

During those early years a more or less intimate connection existed with the Methodist College. This was natural, for the College was only five blocks away. Many out-of-town students, perhaps a majority of them, must have made Wayne Street their church home.

The Church Building Remodeled and Enlarged (1896-1923)

This remodeling was extensive and gave the auditorium about the appearance it has now. It really made the building look like a new structure, inside and out. The balcony was constructed, the floor elevated, new pews put in, and a Sunday School addition built with an auditorium and classrooms. A narrow lot on the west side of the parsonage was purchased, adding to the appearance of the grounds. The parsonage had been joined directly to the church and was located next to it on the west.

The Church Building, with the Large Church School and Gymnasium Annex (1923---)

To meet the demands of the growing church school and to provide recreational facilities, an ambitious building enterprise was launched in 1921. The old Sunday School addition was razed to the ground and the present roomy Church School Annex with its numerous classrooms, its auditorium, large gymnasium, kitchen, etc., was built at an estimated cost of \$86,500. The Dedication Services were held on May 20, 1923. In 1938-39 the sanctuary was radically remodeled, the church redecorated, and a new organ installed, - all at a reported cost of \$13,700. The work was completed early in 1939. Dedicatory services were held March 5, 1939.

In General

Wayne Street Church has been honored four times as the host church for the North Indiana Conference:- in 1874, in 1916, in 1928, and in 1941. Our church is well fitted for meetings of this kind, having a seating capacity of 1200 in the main auditorium. Then there are the facilities of the Church School Annex to accommodate 1000 more with its auditorium and classrooms. Besides, the acoustics of the main auditorium is excellent.

Among the men who have gone out from the church into the ministry can be named M. C. Wright, of the North Indiana Conference; and L. O. Hartmen, Editor of Zion's Herald, Boston, Massachusetts.

In the course of the years, church newspapers or pamphlets in the nature of news-letters with more or less devotional literature included were issued. Among them can be listed "Wayne Street Methodist Episcopal Church Herald", 1891; "Our Methodist Paper", 1897; and the Wayne Street Advocate", 1899.

Present Status of the Church As of the Fourth Quarterly Conference April 30, 1942

Number of Active Members	1024
Enrollment in Church School	651
Membership in Youth Fellowship, including the Junior Epworth League	60
Membership in Woman's Society of Christian Service	250
Paid-up Membership in Men's Club	87
Property Valuation of the Church	\$157000

Newspaper Items According to Files In City Library

(Courtesy of Mr. Potterf)

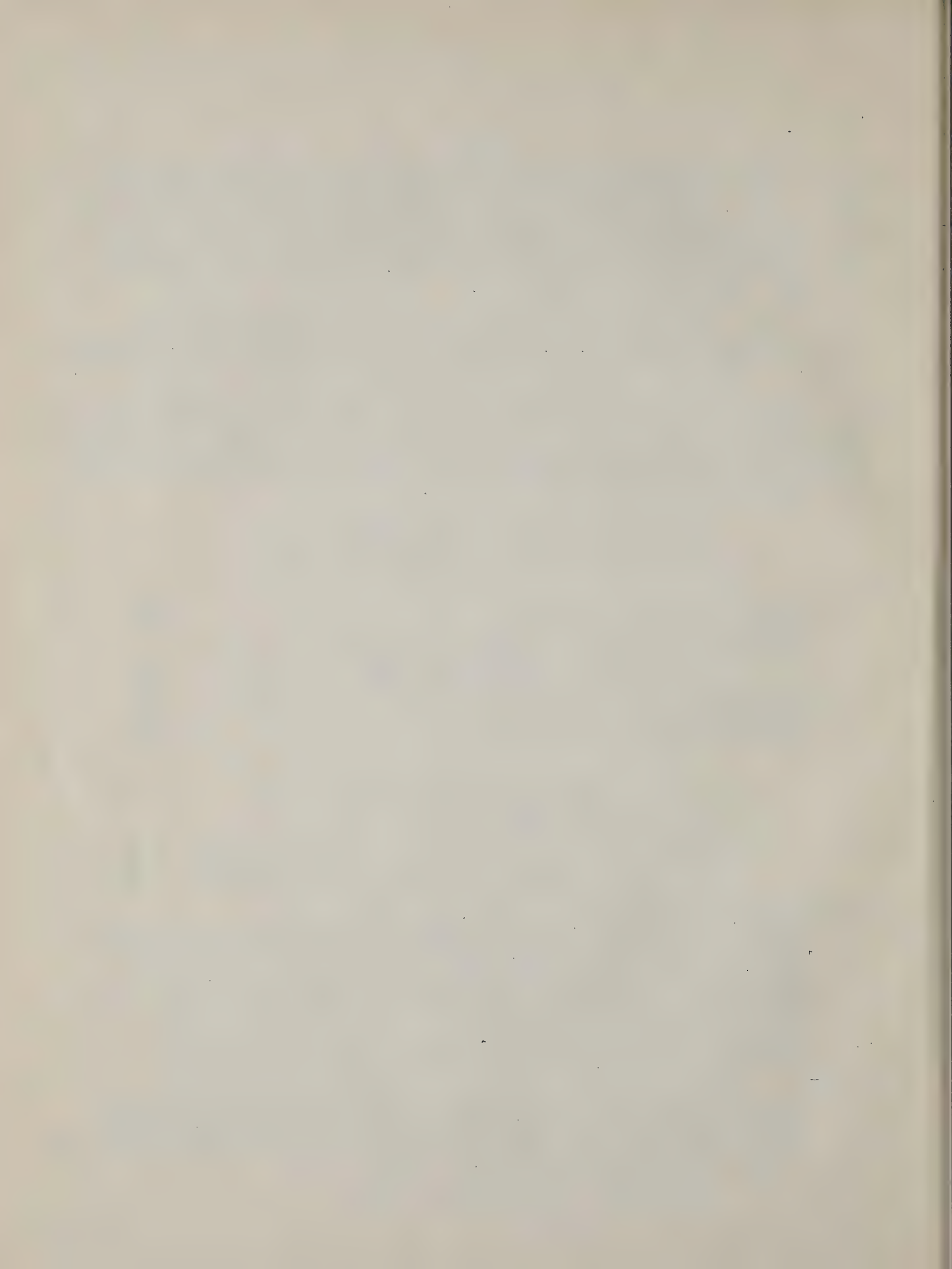
1850-1860 City Population 1850 4,282

Fort Wayne Sentinel (weekly) Nov. 9, 1850

Supper. The Ladies of the Wayne Street Methodist Episcopal church will give a supper next Thursday evening, the 14th inst., in the storeroom formerly occupied by A. B. Miller, the avails of which will be applied to the purchase of a bell for the church. Admittance, 50 cents. Children, half price. The money received at the door.

1850- The same paper in the issue of the week following Nov. 16,

The supper given by the ladies of the Wayne Street Methodist Church on Thursday evening was numerously attended. Upwards of \$150 was realised, which is to be applied towards purchasing a bell for their new church.



1860-1870 Pop. Wayne Twp. 1860 10,388
Daily Gazette Sept. 30, 1865
Church Register. Methodist Episcopal, Corner Wayne and Broadway. Rev. R. Tobey. Services 10½ a.m. and 7½ p.m.

Pop Fort Wayne 1870 17,718
Fort Wayne Daily Sentinel May 27, 1878
The Wayne Street M. E. Sabbath School now meets at 9 a.m. instead of 2:30 p.m., as heretofore.

1880-1890 Pop. Fort Wayne 1880 26,880
Fort Wayne Daily Gazette March 15, 1881
City Church Directory Methodist Episcopal: Wayne Street Church.--- Rev. Augustus E. Mahin Pastor; Sunday Services 10:40 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Sunday School 2p.m.; prayer meeting, Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 p.m.

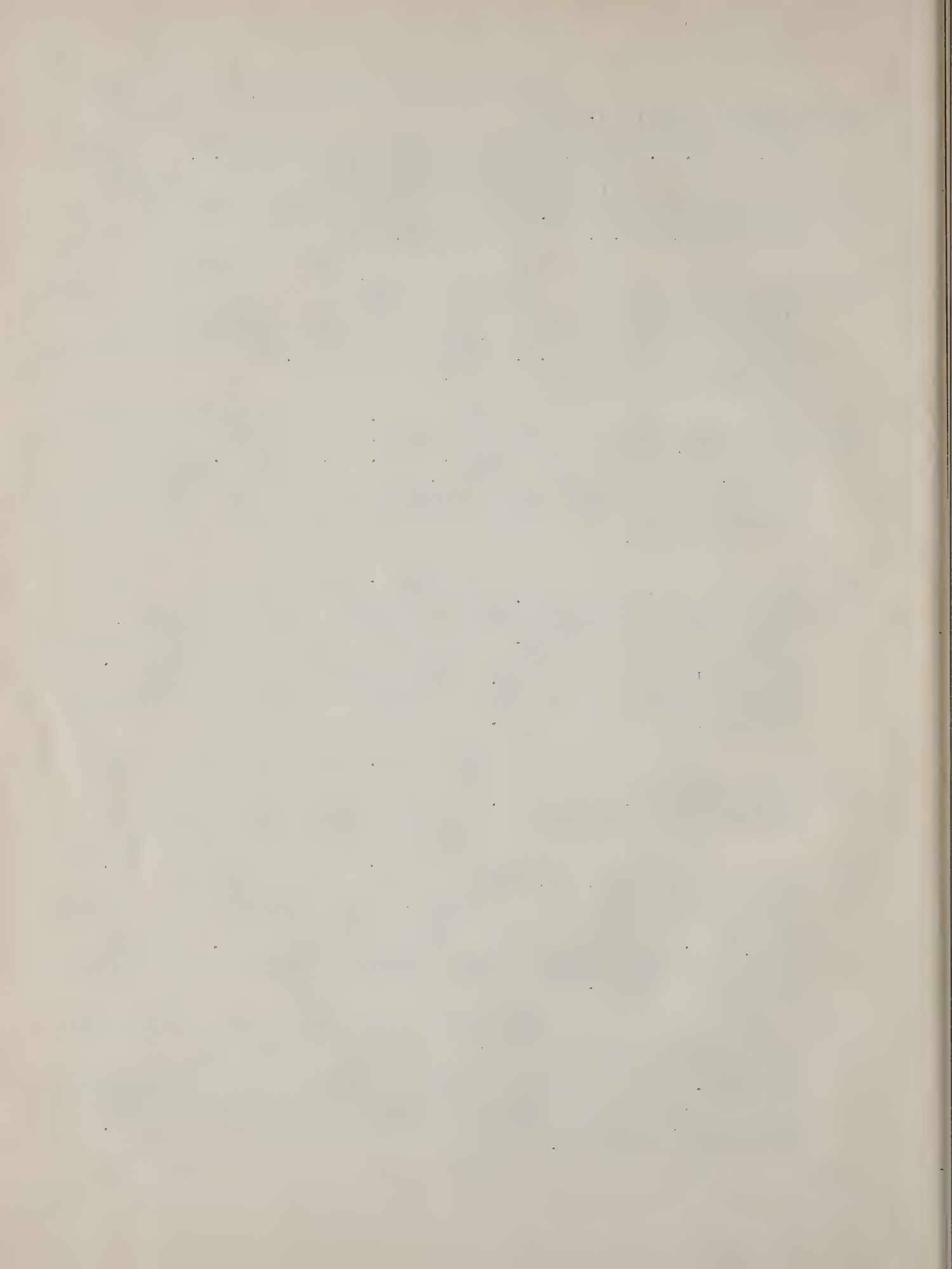
1890-1900 Pop. Fort Wayne 1890 35,393
The Fort Wayne Sentinel Saturday, Oct. 16, 1897
Wayne Street Methodist Church. Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bennett, pastor. All services as usual. Topic for the 10:30 a.m. service will be "A Study in Revelation Concerning the Millenium." In the evening, "The Spiritual Import and Lessons of the Book of Revelations."

1900-1910 Pop. Fort Wayne 1900 45,115
The Fort Wayne Sentinel Jan. 20, 1906
Wayne Street Methodist Episcopal Church, corner Broadway. Asher B. Preston Pastor. At 10:30, subject "Vines and Branches"; evening at 7:30 "The Same Yesterday, today, and Forever". The boys' choir will sing. Sunday School at 9:30; Class at 12; Junior League at 2:30; Epworth League at 6:30; Prayer Meeting Wednesday evening at 7:30.

1910-1920 Pop. Fort Wayne 1910 63,933
Fort Wayne Sentinel June 10, 1914
Wayne Street M. E. Church. The pastor, C. Claud Travis, will speak at both morning and evening services and preach.

1920-1930 Pop. Fort Wayne 1920 86,549
The News-Sentinel Aug. 10, 1929
Wayne Street Methodist Episcopal, Wayne and Broadway. The Rev. William E. Clark, minister. Church School, 9:30. Morning worship, 10:45, subject, "Nothingness". Union evening service at Simpson Church.

1930-1940 Pop. Fort Wayne 1930 114,946
Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette Oct. 7, 1939
Wayne Street Methodist- Wayne at Broadway, E. Bruns Martin, minister. Two preaching services, 9:15 and 10:45, the latter broadcast, WGL. Subjects, "Slippery Places" and "The Eyes of The Heart". Church School Classes, 9:15, 9:30, and 10:10. Epworth League, 6:30.



1940----- Pop. Fort Wayne 1940 118,410

News-Sentinel July 5, 1940

Wayne Street Methodist, Wayne and Broadway. Dr. Paul L. Benedict, minister. Church School, 9:15. First worship service, 9:15, sermon, "Well-proportioned Lives". Second worship service, 10:45, sermon, "Christ and Liberty".

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